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London: Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES, Duke Street, Lambeth.

# TRADES' UNIONS

## AND STRIKES.

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As the working classes form the great mass of every nation, it is a subject of the greatest importance that whatever affects their interests should be thoroughly investigated, and more especially that the effect of Trades' Unions, which have at present so marked and extensive an influence in the country, should be well understood by the members of those bodies. That strikes are productive of very great injury, no one can doubt; it is clear that they cause instant loss to all those persons not engaged in them, as the workman, instead of expending his usual wages, has only the pittance allowed him by his Committee to dispose of; consumption immediately diminishes, the shopkeeper complains of loss of custom, the trade of the town falls off, and finally, the

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increase of the poor's rate, on which many of the men are usually thrown for support when the funds of the Union are exhausted, teaches every householder to feel the mischief which the turn-out has brought upon the public. The turn-out of some hatters in an establishment in Warwickshire caused the receipts of a baker in the town where the manufactory was carried on to fall off from 5*l.* and 6*l.* weekly to 2*l.* and 3*l.* Yet, great as these evils are, there may be as great advantages attending Trades' Unions and strikes.

It must be admitted by those who wish for the welfare of our industrious people, that if these societies could succeed in raising the general rate of wages, they would be admirable institutions, notwithstanding all their disadvantages. If through their means a greater proportion of the produce of labour could be secured to those whose toil is the chief, though not the only source of national wealth and prosperity, every statesman must acknowledge that they would be useful to the community, and that the partial suffering they cause would be cheaply purchased by the increased welfare of the million. The object of this little work



is to shew what has been the effect of former Trades' Unions, whether they have done good or harm to those engaged in them.

We must here observe that those persons are wholly mistaken who suppose that any of the objects which Trades' Unions now aim at are new. Societies, exactly the same in every respect as those which are now so common in the country, have existed time out of mind in various parts of England. They have caused numerous and long-continued turn-outs for the raising of wages, for changing the regulations of trade; in short, for effecting all those objects which the working classes now so eagerly seek. The men have in some places set up manufacturing for themselves, and endeavoured in this way to draw to their own body the profit which is now taken by the capitalists. They have established warehouses for the sale of the products of their labour, a scheme which is now supposed by many of them to be a new invention of Owen, and calculated to confer on their body the greatest benefits. Therefore it will be extremely useful to give a short history of some of these attempts of the working classes to better their condition.

The most extensive and best organised Union which the working classes have ever been able to form is that which exists among the cotton-spinners. The peculiar nature of the cotton trade has given the members of this Union a power and influence, greater than is possessed by any other Trades' Union in the kingdom; for though they do not form more than a tenth part of the workmen engaged in a cotton-mill, their labour is absolutely necessary to the working of the establishment; consequently, if in a cotton-factory containing four hundred workmen, the forty spinners engaged in it choose to turn out, the other three hundred and sixty persons employed must necessarily cease working at the same moment, however unwilling they may be to join in the turn-out.

Thus these forty men, by uniting together, can exercise a complete control over the master and all the rest of their fellow-workmen, compelling them to cease working whenever they please. The men also possess great power of inflicting injury on their employers, owing to the enormous fixed capital usually invested in cotton-mills—a cotton-mill is fre-

quently worth £80,000; the interest of this capital exceeds £75 weekly; consequently that sum must be lost to the possessors of such a mill every week that the men hold out. In most trades, that of tailors for instance, there is little or no fixed capital employed, therefore the men have comparatively little power to injure their masters by striking. The spinners have availed themselves of these advantages in every possible way: they have been united together throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland for more than thirty years; their wages being in general 30s. a week, they have collected large sums in subscriptions; they have made the most compact and best regulated Union that ever has or probably ever can be formed; and they have had numerous turn-outs and struggles with their masters for advance of wages: therefore it will be highly useful to see what has been the effect of this Trades' Union—what good the members of it have been able to obtain from the unusually favourable circumstances in which they are placed. For this purpose we shall give an account of some of the principal

strikes which have been made by the Spinners' Union.

The most extensive and persevering strike that has ever taken place is that which occurred in 1810, when all the spinners in all the mills in the neighbourhood of Manchester, including Stockport, Macclesfield, Stayley Bridge, Ashton, Hyde, Oldham, Bolton, and as far north as Preston, simultaneously left their work, and had the strike continued a little longer the whole of Scotland would have joined it ; as it was, thirty thousand persons were thrown out of employ ; many of them paraded the streets of the above towns during the day, shouting and hooting at the residences of those persons who, they supposed, were inimical to their cause ; attacks were frequently made on the factories, in defiance of the police, who were utterly inefficient for protection ; many masters were unable to leave their mills for fear of their lives ; and such workmen as were got to supply the place of the seceders, were held prisoners in a state of almost continual siege, in the establishments where they worked. During this turn-out the men who had struck were supported by the contributions of those

who were in work, and the sums so collected amounted, for a considerable period, to nearly 1500*l.* weekly, of which Manchester alone paid upwards of 600*l.* This fund was for some time sufficiently large to enable the Union to make a weekly payment of 12*s.* to the spinners who had struck ; but the contributions, and consequently the allowances that flowed from them, gradually fell off, till they at length ceased altogether, and those who depended on them were consigned to utter destitution. The principal object which the workmen had in view was to raise the wages in country districts to a level with those in Manchester—at that time 4*d.* was paid in the country parts for spinning a pound of cotton, and 4½*d.* in Manchester, and to raise the country wages to the latter sum was the aim of the Union.

When the contributions of those in work failed, such of the men as had laid by money in the days of their prosperity resorted to it for their support, and thus the hard-earned savings of perhaps years of industry were consumed in this hopeless warfare. Furniture, clothes, every article of comfort or convenience that

their cottages contained was then disposed of, and these unhappy victims of their own folly voluntarily endured the greatest privations in the groundless expectation of at length attaining what they had turned out for.

The required advance of wages was not obtained in a single instance, and after four months of misery the men returned to their work, some even accepting employment at the rate of 2*d.* per pound instead of 4*d.*, which they had been previously earning; *thus submitting to a reduction of one-half from those wages, to raise which every thing they possessed, and almost life itself, had been staked.*

In the year 1824, all the spinners in Hyde turned out for an advance of wages; the result of which was, that the men, after enduring the greatest hardships, and costing the Union between 3000*l.* and 4000*l.* for their support, came back to their work at the same wages which they had turned out to raise.

In 1829, another serious turn-out took place, by which twenty-one mills and 10,000 persons were thrown idle for six months. John Redman, a workman, says, with reference to this strike, in his examination taken before the



Factory Commission last year :—" The consequence was, that at the end of six months they came into work again at a reduced rate of wages ; and I fear that it will be long before Manchester operatives recover from the evils which were entailed upon them by that turn-out." In addition to the common outrages, which have always accompanied strikes in the cotton trade, this was sullied with the crime of assassination. Many masters were shot at ; but these villainous attempts were unsuccessful, except in the case of Mr. T. Ashton, whose murderers have hitherto escaped unpunished ; and it is only within the last month that a clue has been obtained, which, it is to be hoped, will lead to the discovery of those who committed this atrocious crime.

The last great strike amongst the spinners took place in December, 1830, when 3000 spinners at Ashton and Stayley-bridge left their work, by which fifty-two mills and 30,000 persons were thrown idle for ten weeks, when the men returned to their employment at the same wages which they had been receiving before the turn-out.

It will be perceived from the foregoing ac-

count that these strikes have not succeeded in any single instance. The Spinner's Union, notwithstanding the great power it possesses over the masters, has not only failed to benefit its members by strikes, but has been even unable sometimes to prevent a *reduction* of the men's wages after a turn-out. Mr. Aaron Lees, a large manufacturer in the neighbourhood of Manchester, says, in his evidence before the Factory Commission, that the effect of strikes has *always* been to lower wages; but we suspect that there may be some inaccuracy in this statement: however, it is quite certain they have never raised them. He is asked—

“Have you ever known a turn-out to succeed?—Never: every one, without exception, has ended in a reduction of wages immediately after, on account of the influx of fresh hands causing a superabundance of labour.”

Mr. Rowland Detrosier, whose name must be known to many of our readers, and who had had great experience in strikes, gives the following evidence on this point:—

“Have you paid attention to the circumstances which affect wages?—I have; and



have had frequent opportunities of discussing this subject with some of the more intelligent of the working men during the period of their turns-out.

“ Do you mean, by the more intelligent of the men, those who most influenced them, or their leaders?—No ; I mean those who in my estimation possessed a more than usual degree of knowledge : but I have also had discussions and conversations with their leaders.

“ Are they always or usually of the most intelligent?—Not always : they are sometimes more characterized by their extreme opinions than by their positive knowledge.

“ What proportion of their measures have been attended with success?—Comparatively few indeed.

“ What proportion of their measures have been attended with cost or privation to the operatives?—I am compelled to say, that in almost all cases the results have been unfavourable to the working men themselves.

“ And was this so in plans for matters unconnected with direct disputes with masters, as well as contests for wages?—Yes.

“ Specify some instances?—A newspaper

was established in Manchester by the operatives : it was called the ' Voice of the People.' It was mismanaged, and failed. A sum of about 2,000*l.*, I believe, was lost in this speculation. In addition to this, a very laudable scheme, as I consider, was carried into effect by the dyers of Manchester; they commenced a dying establishment, the profits of which were to be devoted to the purposes of their Trades' Union.

"What were those purposes?—I think that union combined the two objects of a benefit-society and a protection of their wages; but of this I am not quite positive.

"What were the results?—It failed; more, however, from a want of union amongst themselves, than from any lack of ability to carry it on.

"Can you give any other instances?—I have heard of other instances, but I am not able to specify them particularly.

"Have you heard of any instance of success?—I know of no instances of success connected with Trades' Unions.

"Neither in trading speculation nor in strikes?—I know of none.

“ Were not the funds for these experiments made up of pittances sometimes hardly spared? —They were certainly hardly earned ; and in many instances they could be ill spared.”

John Pilkington, who had been a Manchester working spinner, gives the following evidence :—

“ Have you ever seen a turn-out?—Yes, of all the factories in town. One day they turned out, and the next day there would be fresh hands in some of the factories working.

“ Where did these fresh hands come from? —Some came from the country, and some was big piecers what took to spinning.

“ Did the turn-out succeed?—No : there has been a great many turn-outs, and they have never succeeded.”

The introduction of fresh workmen to a trade, a result which almost always follows strikes, inevitably leads to the lowering of wages ; and this consideration enables us to predict what will be the end of the present turn-out among the London journeymen tailors. We have no doubt whatever that their

wages will be reduced by it. The master tailors have already brought some fresh journeymen to London, and will shortly bring many more. It is true that they pay these new journeymen 6s. a day, and have no intention of offering a less daily sum to their old workmen, whenever the men choose to return to their employment. But there are other modes by which a reduction of the men's earnings may take place, and in this case the process will be brought about in the following way. At present a journeyman tailor cannot get full employ for more than four or five months in the year. As new workmen will have been introduced into the trade, and the quantity of work to be done will remain the same, it is clear that there will be *less* for each man to do ; if a journeyman tailor can now only get employment for four or five months in the year, he will only be able to get it after the strike for three or four. The longer the turn-out continues, the greater will be the number of new workmen introduced to the tailoring business, and the smaller will be the Unionists' wages when

they return to their masters. We know that one master tailor went to Germany by the steam-boat the instant his men struck, for the purpose of bringing over one hundred German workmen to England; another went to Paris for the same purpose. Every day that they continue to refuse work will diminish something from their yearly earnings for the future. This prediction we make without the least doubt of its literal fulfilment.

In the mean time the loss of wages that they will sustain from doing no work is enormous. There are fourteen thousand tailors in London, and in order to avoid exaggeration we shall suppose that half of this number have struck, and that their wages average 5*s.* a day, though both of these suppositions are probably below the truth: seven thousand times 5*s.* make 1750*l.*, which is the sum that the journeymen tailors are now daily losing by their refusal to work. It seems extraordinary that the working classes should frequently raise such an outcry against taxation, (and we do not offer an opinion whether they are right in so doing,) and yet should sometimes voluntarily

tax themselves far more heavily than they are taxed by the Legislature. According to the present amount of taxation, every Englishman is reckoned to pay to Government 60*s.* a year in taxes ; now we have just seen that each journeyman tailor loses 5*s.* a day, or 30*s.* a week, by turning out ; consequently, if the strike continues a fortnight, it is the same thing to him as if the Government taxes were doubled this year. The money raised by Government on the people amounts to fifty millions a year ; what should we say if the ministers were suddenly to double all the taxes and burden the country with a hundred millions instead of fifty ? Yet this is what the tailors now voluntarily impose on themselves. But the strike may last six weeks instead of a fortnight, and then the effect will be the same to those who turn out as if the Government taxes were *quadrupled*, and the national income was two hundred millions instead of fifty. And further, what are we to think of the conduct of these journeymen if the result of all these hardships on their part should be to reduce their wages permanently when they return to their work ?



and of this effect taking place, as we have said before, we have no doubt whatever.

One of the most extensive and protracted strikes that has ever occurred, is the one which took place last year in Lancashire among the workmen in the building trades. In the spring the workmen desired their masters to leave off building on the contract system, that is, on the system now commonly adopted of a master entering into a contract with any one wishing to build, by which he bound himself to furnish whatever was required for the construction of the whole house. The masters agreed to this proposal, upon which the Union issued a series of regulations, requiring the employers to obey certain rules respecting the equalization of wages, to the number of apprentices to be taken, the use of machinery, and a variety of other matters. These laws the workmen declared were "like those of the Medes and Persians, unalterable;" and any master, who dared to infringe them in the smallest particular, was instantly deprived of his workmen. These regulations were found to place such serious impediments

in the way of business, that the masters determined to employ no workmen except such as should sign a declaration that they did not and would not belong to a Trades' Union. The men refused to comply with this demand, in consequence of which a general turn-out ensued, and for more than six months the vast building operations commonly carried on amidst the immense population of Manchester, Liverpool, and places in the vicinity, were almost entirely suspended. We may form some idea of the magnitude of the effects resulting from this proceeding, when it is stated that the consumption of bricks in Liverpool was instantly reduced from a million weekly to twenty thousand.

The men persisted in their strike for more than six months, when, there being no prospect of the masters acceding to their proposals, the combination was voted a nuisance, and forsaken by all, and they returned in penitence to their employers, requesting work on the old terms. But they paid sufficiently dear for their folly. During the best part of the year, when their labour was most in re-



quest, and their wages at the highest point, they had remained idle, living on the scanty allowance doled out to them by the Union funds. The sum spent in making these allowances approached 18,000*l.*, and as the payments to workmen, who have turned out, never average at the most more than one-fourth of the earnings, four times this sum, or 72,000*l.*, was the loss, which the working builders sustained in pursuit of their project. They had hoped that their masters would have been willing and eager to re-employ them when the strike was at an end. But even this small consolation was in a great measure groundless, as the event proved. They had refused work when there was work in abundance for all; in consequence of this refusal, many of the buildings were discontinued, and the places of some of the men were supplied by fresh labourers brought from distant parts, and also by the introduction of machinery: so that the applications for employment could not be granted. Every circumstance seemed to concur in increasing the misery of their condition. By their long

cessation from work, habits of idleness, and not a little increase of immorality had ensued,—in the false hope of attaining their object, they had endured privations only second to actual starvation, and now, when the day of forced repentance had come, the still further degradation of pauperism awaited them. The failure of the strike was complete, and the disastrous consequences that resulted from it have taught a lesson to the Lancashire workpeople, which it is to be hoped they will never forget.

The cloth trade of Leeds has been seriously damaged by the conduct of the workmen, and to this moment the town has not recovered from the effects of the very first strike caused by the Trades' Union in that place about three years ago. This turn-out took place in one of the largest manufacturing establishments in Leeds, which belonged to Messrs. Gott. The proprietors had, at that time, just completed an enormous building, intended for the weaving of fine woollen cloth; all the costly machinery adapted to this purpose had been purchased and erected; every necessary

arrangement for commencing the business had been made, when all the weavers, to the number of two hundred and ten, turned out for an increase of wages.

For some weeks the required advance of wages was resisted, till at length those men who continued at their work were subject to such treatment on entering and leaving the factory, being hooted, pelted, and annoyed in other ways, (which, though not direct violations of law, are almost as effectual as personal violence,) that the proprietors, receiving no support or countenance from other manufacturers, were induced to accede to the terms proposed. The men, however, were disappointed in obtaining all the advantages they looked for, as Messrs. Gott determined only to take back sufficient weavers to work the looms in the old part of their establishment, leaving their newly-erected building unused. They soon after disposed of all the machinery it contained, and this magnificent structure, no less than one hundred and thirty-six yards in length, now stands in useless grandeur, untenanted by a single piece of machinery, or

one human being,—a melancholy monument of the disastrous effect consequent on the first exercise of power by the Leeds' Union.

Perhaps there is no body of men in England who have had greater experience in strikes than the framework-knitters of Leicester, Derby, and Nottingham. From 1817 to the present time they have been engaged in at least a dozen severe strikes, and seem to have tried every means that ingenuity could plan, in the view of gaining their end. The strike of 1818 and 1819 is the most remarkable that has taken place, since the workmen were supported not only by their own resources, but by the subscriptions of most of the landed gentry and nobility of the neighbourhood, who, with the Duke of Devonshire at their head, collected upwards of 13,000*l.* to assist the men in their contest with the masters. Robert Hall, the celebrated dissenting minister, published two most eloquent pamphlets in defence of the men; and yet all was to no purpose. In spite of the powerful aid thus afforded to the workmen, their endeavours ended in total failure. Edward Sansome, one of the leading

workmen engaged in this strike, says, in his evidence before the Factory Commissioners, "They moved heaven and earth in 1819 to try to keep them (wages) up; nothing would do." The scheme which is now proposed to be adopted by the National Consolidated Trades' Union, of the men manufacturing and selling on their own account the products of their labour, was fully tried in this turn-out. The workmen obtained machines of their own, manufactured hosiery, and offered it for sale in a public mart, established for this express purpose. They had no reason to complain of want of encouragement, customers came in plenty to this mart, and they sometimes sold goods to the amount of 300*l.* in a single day; and yet, in the words of Edward Sansome, "nothing would do." The men were completely baffled in their object.

Now what has been the general result to the workmen of Leicester and Nottingham? have they gained any thing, and what, by their Unions and never-ending strikes? We have no hesitation in saying that there is not a worse-paid, a more miserable and destitute

set of men in the kingdom than the workmen in these towns. Many of them can earn only 8s. a week, working sixteen hours a day, and a stocking-weaver is readily distinguishable from the rest of the population by his ragged dress and his haggard and sickly countenance. The last great strike at Derby has ended like all former ones, in the complete discomfiture of the men. Every class of workmen, in every part of the kingdom, seem to have united to support their Derby brethren, and to have subscribed most liberally for that purpose. Birmingham alone sometimes sent 100*l.* in a week. The following are *some* of the sums that were collected from different parts of the kingdom:—Worcester, 50*l.*; Hinckley, 20*l.*; district round Derby, 94*l.*; London bricklayers, 27*l.* 10*s.*; Nottingham sent from 30*l.* to 40*l.*, and Leicester 20*l.* weekly, during the whole of the strike; in short, we believe that many thousand pounds, which could hardly be less than 15,000*l.*, were subtracted from the hard earnings of the working classes to support this hopeless attempt of the Derby men to raise their wages. The Council of the



Trades' Union in London acknowledge, that "the dear-bought experience of the past, and particularly the case of the turned-out operatives of Derby," has proved that they cannot ameliorate their condition by strikes. Many of the Derby workmen will probably have to regret to the end of their lives the consequences of their conduct, and to curse the unthinking generosity of their fellow-labourers who subscribed to assist them in this contest. Had these subscriptions failed sooner, the Derby masters would not have brought fresh workmen into their factories, and many of those who had turned out might have resumed their old places. The bounty of the operatives in other parts of the kingdom enabled the Derby men to hold out for six months, and when they again applied for work there was none for them, and six hundred men were reduced to the extreme of poverty, with the parish only for their resource against starvation.

The great Bradford turn-out of 1825 was the cause of much bloodshed among the men ; it ended in total failure, though they stood out

for ten months, and only returned to their work when compelled to do so by the fear of actual starvation. Few strikes have been more determined, or have caused more disastrous consequences to the workmen engaged; many of whom, to this day, have never been able to recover from the state of poverty and destitution to which they were then reduced. Two years ago another remarkable strike took place in this trade, when all the workpeople belonging to Messrs. Hindes and Derham, exceeding a thousand in number, were thrown out of employ. This strike ended, like the former one, in the complete discomfiture of the men, and it forms an instance of a manufacturer having single-handed defied the whole power of one of the most extensive Unions in England, and at length gaining the victory. This result is mainly owing to the peculiar situation of the mills belonging to the firm, one of which was situated in Dolphinholme, a small hamlet seven miles from Lancaster, a second in Leeds, and a third in Bradford. The first of these was the chief scene of the dispute, and to its distance from any large town,



and facility of getting workmen from the neighbouring agricultural district, the successful resistance must in a great measure be ascribed. The little reason there was for a strike on the score of wages may be learnt from the fact, that the earnings of forty wool-combers in the year previous to their turning out, averaged 41*l.* 11*s.* 9½*d.* each man, or 15*s.* 11¾*d.* weekly; and that the average earnings of the sixty-three families employed in the establishment for the same time, consisting of four persons and a minute fraction in every family, were 87*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* Every mode of annoyance which the Union could devise was put in practice on this occasion. The workmen lived in cottages belonging to their employers, and obstinately refused to quit, when the proprietors were compelled to bring no less than forty-seven actions of ejectment at the Lancaster assizes, in order to obtain possession. Funds for the support of the men were subscribed by their fellow-workmen in every part of the country, as will be seen by the following extract from the books of the Union, which gives the receipts and

payments to Dolphinholme from September 11th, 1832, to February 2d, 1833.

PAID TO DOLPHINHOLME.

	£.	s.	d.
From Kendal.....	27	16	0
Leeds.....	58	5	11
Halifax .....	85	0	0
No. 2 Lodge, No. 2 District.....	5	0	0
*Bradford.....	1822	10	3½
Other sums from Keighley, Halifax, and Kidderminster.....	59	9	8½
Total paid to Dolphinholme	2058	1	11

Besides the sums disbursed in maintaining in idleness those who had struck, and which are not all given in the preceding account, many other heavy expenses were incurred. Among these we may mention the sending the whole of the Dolphinholme workmen across the country to Leeds, and on the whole, we have reason to believe that 4,000*l.* is beneath the sum which the Union expended in this unsuccessful contest.

\* This large subscription is owing to Bradford being the principal seat of the worsted trade.

This strike was the cause of the invention of the wool-combing machine, which wholly superseded the labour of that class of men who were the chief ringleaders in this affair, and which has struck a blow at their combination that it never can recover.

“It is a hard thing,” says Miss Martineau, in her little work called ‘Strikes and Sticks,’ “for a man to see his children’s maintenance frittered away in upholding such expenses as the following:—

	£.	s.	d.
Meat, drink, lodgings of delegates from various parts of the kingdom . . . . .	240	16	11
Travelling expenses of delegates from Bradford . . . . .	286	14	1
Expenses of committees . . . .	466	9	10
Stationery, newspapers, and advertisements . . . . .	345	8	9
Postage and carriage of parcels .	43	15	11
Loss by bad bank-notes . . . .	11	1	0”

This is the account of part of the expenses attending the great Bradford strike of 1825, which ended in total failure; conse-

quently all the above large sums, the hard-earned savings of the workmen, were literally as much lost as if they had been thrown into the sea. The following is the statement of the expenditure of the Mechanics' Union of Glasgow for the first six months of 1833:—

	£.	s.	d.
Donations . . . . .	3	15	10
Travellers . . . . .	2	8	2
Delegates' expenses . . . . .	19	6	3
Postages and parcels . . . . .	3	2	5
Stationery . . . . .	0	6	11½
Club and committee liquor . . . . .	5	1	9
Hall rent . . . . .	10	13	9
Seal for Belfast branch . . . . .	0	7	6
Lent to delegates . . . . .	2	0	0
Propositions returned . . . . .	0	5	0
Bad silver in the box . . . . .	0	2	0
Expenses for furniture for the hall, gas pipes, chandeliers, committee liquor, &c. . . . .	47	4	4
Total expenses . . . . .	£95	3	11½

The most corrupt parish vestry in the kingdom would hardly dare to present an

account so disgracefully jobbing as the preceding. More than 5*l.* is charged for drink, and half of the whole expenditure heaped together in such a way, as wholly to prevent a proper investigation of the objects of expenditure. The last charge, for “committee liquor,” and the “&c.” has a very suspicious appearance. The half-yearly report of the expenses of the Newcastle Mechanics’ Union contains the following items:—

	£.	s.	d.
Club and committee liquor . . .	4	6	0½
Painting president’s chair . . .	0	4	6
New top, and side curtains for president’s chair . . . . .	2	1	11½

It is lamentable to think that the wages of the workmen, instead of increasing the comforts of themselves and families, are sometimes consumed in such absurd charges as putting new curtains to their president’s chair. The truth is, the great body of the workmen are cheated in every possible way by their committees, who are consequently always desirous of keeping the men in the

dark with respect to the way in which their money is spent. One of the members of the Gilders' Trade Union says, in a published letter, "it has been deemed expedient in past times to govern our little trade by secresy, the mass of the members only having to pay, but ask no questions as to the appropriations of the money." Doubtless these seem to be very good reasons why the committees of the Trades' Unions should not like questions to be asked respecting the appropriation of the money. We have before us a Statement of the half-yearly Expenses of all the Lodges of the Union of Mechanics in England, Scotland, and Ireland; in all of them the charge for committee liquor is a large, and in some the chief item in the accounts: so that we may apply to the Unionists literally the words of the prophet—"he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."

There appears no reason to doubt, and it would be of the greatest service to the country could the truth be impressed on the minds of the workmen, that their combina-

tions have never succeeded in raising, but, on the contrary, have sometimes caused a depression of wages. Instances of the mode in which their object has been baffled have been given from the cotton trade; but it may be of advantage to add some examples from other trades, in order to show the universal nature of the obstacles that oppose the attainment of their wishes. Many of the Leeds workmen themselves allow, that they have gained nothing by entering into a combination, the contributions necessary to support which cause a never-ceasing drain on their pockets. One case has been mentioned, in which the Union spent 4,000*l.* in a fruitless attempt to bring a master under their control, the only result of which was to cause many new workmen to enter the trade, and thus lower the rate of their wages. The shipwrights in Liverpool struck for an advance of wages in 1816, and having continued idle twenty-two weeks, returned to their work at five per cent. reduction from what they were receiving when they turned out. The hatters in London struck in 1820, demanding an



increase of 1s. per dozen hats; and after staying out for fifteen weeks, they accepted employment from their masters at a *decrease* of 1s., instead of a rise of that sum, which they had forfeited nearly a third of a year's wages to gain.

Where the workmen have succeeded in compelling their employers to raise wages, they have equally failed to derive benefit, or even to escape injury from the change. This has sometimes arisen from the high wages attracting more labourers to enter the trade in which they have been given than can be supplied with work, who consequently must either be supported by those who get work, or else the competition of their numbers beats down the advance that has been obtained; in both which cases the advance, or more than the advance, is instantly lost; sometimes it has arisen from the expense of maintaining the various burdens which a combination entails, such as clerks, secretaries, delegates, meeting-rooms, &c.—from the falling off of consumption in consequence of the increase of price; and therefore less being manufactured, and



less wages distributed among the body of the Unionists,—from the driving away of the manufacture to other places,—from some one of these or other causes, the advantage vanishes in the moment of expected enjoyment, and generally leaves the workmen in a worse state than before. On this point, some valuable evidence was taken by the Committee of the House of Commons, that sat last Session, to inquire into the state of trade. Mr. Jackson, a manufacturer at Sheffield, where the combinations have done almost irreparable injury to the cutlery business, says, on his examination:—

The workman does not benefit, strictly speaking, by combination ; though he gets high wages, he has sometimes to pay 20 per cent. out of his wages for keeping up the combination, besides an occasional levy of 1*l*.! and besides, to obtain this advantage, it frequently happens that they are out of employment for several months ; so that I have frequently said to the workmen, that I defy them to prove that any steady industrious man ever benefited by it ; that is to say, that the cost of obtaining the advance is greater than the advantage ultimately realized.—Have the combinations you have mentioned had the tendency of

raising the price generally?—My opinion is, that they have a tendency ultimately to reduce it; an augmentation of wages has taken place; if trade has been remarkably brisk, and the demand made by the workmen has mostly been for an exorbitant price, this price has generally been maintained for a very short time, for a month, perhaps, to execute the orders on hand, but the price of goods was in consequence so far augmented, as to stop the demand in our foreign markets, and a subsequent reaction taking place, it has been ascertained, that after a turn-out of workmen, and a consequent augmentation in the price of goods, the price has fallen much below the previous level; and when workmen have attempted to gain exorbitant wages for their labour, it has ended, in the sequel, by bringing the rate of their labour to a less standard than that from which they previously started.

Another witness, John Milner, gives the following evidence on this point. He was a journeyman till within the last three years, and was deputed by the Freeman's Society, which is composed principally of journeymen, to attend the Committee:—

Is it your opinion, that those combinations have

been successful in effecting their objects, and in amending the condition of the workmen?—*They have been unsuccessful generally.*

What have been their effects? have they had any effect in increasing or diminishing the fluctuation of wages?—They have in general failed in their object; indeed, I may say, on almost every occasion, they have ultimately failed; they have seldom had a tendency to establish any regular wages.

During the time of those combinations, have not the contributions of the workmen cost them as much as they have gained by the keeping up their wages?—In many instances, the loss of time and the expense has been much more than the benefit resulting from it during the time that it existed. I believe that in Sheffield, the rage for combination begins to subside, and many of the workmen, who were zealous advocates for combinations a few years since, have had the combination surfeit.

Numerous instances may be quoted of manufactures been driven from the places in which they were originally established, owing to the combinations of the workmen engaged in them. Both Paisley and Macclesfield owe

their rise to the high wages demanded in Spitalfields; and Macclesfield in turn has lost part of its silk trade to the benefit of Manchester, from the same causes that had before driven it from London. Some manufacturers have lately left Coventry, owing to the continual annoyances from strikes to which they were exposed in that town, and established factories in Essex. The combination at Leeds has thrown many of the looms idle in that town, to the profit of the weavers in the neighbouring villages, and more especially of the clothing establishments in the West of England, whither many orders for goods have been sent during the last summer, owing to the difficulty of getting them executed in Yorkshire. The carpet trade has been seriously injured by the strikes in Kidderminster, and has in consequence partly migrated to Kilbarnock. But perhaps Ireland has suffered more than any other country in this way by the folly of its working population. Owing to the Union in Dublin, planks can be cut into boards 35 per cent. cheaper in Liverpool than in that town; and, consequently,

ship-building, which has been long lingering in Ireland, although the demand for all kinds of vessels is rapidly on the increase, threatens speedily to desert the shores of that island altogether. In a discussion in the House of Commons, on March 13th, the member for Dundalk said, "In the parish in which I reside, there is a large fishing population, which lives on the poorest possible fare; but it is impossible to get their boats repaired, except for double what is paid elsewhere, on account of the union of the ship-carpenters of the district." Some time ago, an Irish manufacturer required for his business several large metal utensils, and being desirous that his own country should have the profit of supplying them, he called upon the master of some iron-works, and stated his readiness to sacrifice a considerable per-centage, rather than that the order should be sent out of the country. The master informed him that he was prevented from manufacturing the articles, even at the proposed advance of price, and that he was unable to compete with his English rivals, not from any want of coal, or from any local advantages possessed on the other side of

the Channel, but solely on account of the combinations by which he was beset. The result was, that the manufacturer was obliged to have recourse to the English market\*. Mr. Robinson, an extensive iron-master in Dublin, constructed, several years ago, a machine for the manufacture of nails; the nail-makers determined to prevent its use, and got the workmen in those trades in which nails are used, to pass a resolution, that they would not work with any that had been made by this machine. Consequently, machine-made nails from Birmingham quickly drove the Dublin ones out of the market; the manufacture of nails left the latter place altogether, and has, we believe, never returned. Dr. Doyle, in his evidence before the Irish Committee of 1830, gives some remarkable instances of the evil his country has sustained from combinations. He is asked,—

Do you not think it a desirable object to illustrate to the labouring classes, and particularly to artizans, the evil effects of those combinations, which have so much retarded and checked industry in Ireland?—If artizans par-

\* Dublin Evening Post, December 19, 1833.



ticularly could be so convinced, very great advantages would result both to themselves and to the community at large, for their combinations are most injurious to the public interest. The week before I left home I spent a few days in Kilkenny, on a visit with the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. They were at that time disposing, in that city, of a fund of 300*l.* or 400*l.* raised for the relief of the poor. There was a question of setting to work the unemployed weavers, which led to my inquiry into some particulars with regard to them. It was the opinion, however, of those gentlemen, then conversing, that the combinations among that description of work-people were the chief cause of the almost extinction of the blanket manufacture in Kilkenny, and though the citizens were then obliged to relieve them out of the public funds, these weavers themselves were the cause of their own misfortunes; for as soon as they discovered that a manufacturer had a contract for making blankets, or that there was a demand for goods, they immediately struck, and would not work unless for very high prices: hence the manufacturers were unable to enter into contracts, lest they should be disappointed, or that too high wages would be extorted from them; and the consequence was that the manufacture went down altogether.



Do you consider those combinations amongst the artizans and manufacturers one of the most serious difficulties to the extension of manufacturing industry in Ireland?—It is one of the great obstacles to it.

A Dublin witness also stated before the Combination Committee of 1825, that he knew “ five persons in different branches, and all largely connected in trade, not one of whom would take a contract, from the conviction, that the moment it was known they had taken a contract, there would be a strike among their men.”

At the present time, the trade of the Irish capital seems in great measure paralyzed by the Unions, and outrages to forward their objects are of frequent occurrence. These facts will account, at least as probably, for the depression of Irish industry, and that of Dublin in particular (a city where the spirit of combination has been carried to its utmost height), as any of the political causes which have been alleged by so many parties.

But an evil of far more serious import to the nation is, when the manufacture, instead of changing from one part of the country to

another, leaves it altogether and takes refuge in foreign parts. This has actually taken place in some instances, and the rapid increase of Continental rivalry, by teaching foreigners to adopt our habits of industry, and our improved machinery, daily renders it easier for them to supplant us in the market. It is obvious, indeed, that if this effect has not more generally followed, every additional attack on the profits of the home manufacturer must have this tendency, and augment the chances of foreign products successfully competing with British.

In 1820, a Glasgow cotton manufacturer emigrated from that city, and established a factory at New York, that he might conduct his business free from those interruptions, to which it was subjected in this country from the strikes among his men. The conduct of the Sheffield workmen already threatens the extinction of the trade of that town, and its passing over to our French and German rivals. At present the same labour in the manufacture of saws which cost 15s. or 20s. at Sheffield, can be done for 1s. 3d. at Molsheim, in the neighbourhood of Strasburg.

The consequence is, the exportation of this article to the Continent, which was considerable some years ago, has almost wholly ceased: many other of the Sheffield productions have shared the same fate; and America is almost the only market that is left for the sale of the manufactures of that town. At present the condition of the Sheffield operatives is far worse in respect of comfort than at any preceding period, and the town exhibits the extraordinary spectacle, the inevitable result of successful combinations, of high wages, a decaying trade and a destitute population. The business that remains is now dependent on our friendly relations with the United States: war or the policy of a tariff may equally extinguish it; and should that happen, the Sheffield workmen may perhaps at length learn, amidst unavailing regrets, that the question has not been, whether they shall get high or moderate wages, but moderate wages or none at all.

An instance of transference of a manufacture to the Continent, in consequence of strikes, has lately occurred in the woollen trade. The workmen in a large cloth-dying establishment

in Yorkshire turned out for an advance of wages. It happened that the firm were large exporters of *finished* cloth to Germany, where they possessed a small dyeing factory, of which, however, little use was made. The proprietors, on the stoppage of their business in England, were induced to try the experiment of sending the greater part of their cloth, in a white state, to Germany, and dyeing it there, where they could be free from the dictation of Trades' Unions. It is but fair to add that other causes may have contributed in inducing the firm to try this new speculation; among others, the high duty on drugs in England, and the low duties on the importation of undyed cloth, as compared with dyed cloth, into Germany. The experiment not only answered expectation, but many other unlooked-for advantages resulted from the change. A saving was made in the expense of insurance, as the article was less valuable, when in course of transit; there was also less risk of its being spoilt by sea-water, as the subsequent dyeing remedied any damage it might sustain from this cause. Consequently, the proprietors in question have been

transferring their dyeing business to Germany, carrying their skill and experience with them; large additions have been made to their foreign factory; and whereas, before the strike, they did not export above five hundred pieces of undyed cloth weekly, they now send from one thousand to one thousand two hundred in the same time. As increased profit has attended this change in the locality of their dyeing trade, it is clear that this firm will never bring back its business to England; on the contrary, it is to be feared, that the example will be imitated by other firms, and the eventual result may be, that the profit of dyeing all the cloth that is sent to Germany, amounting to nearly twenty thousand pieces annually, may be lost to this country.

The strike of the frame-work knitters, in 1817 and 1818, had an effect on our export trade of hosiery articles, which is felt to this day. In those years the foreign buyers of these goods, being unable to obtain their usual supplies from the English manufacturers, in consequence of the turn-out, went to Germany to make their purchases. From that period

the Germans got a hold on the export trade of hosiery, which they have been yearly increasing, assisted as they have been by numerous strikes of the workmen in this country. Great part of the hosiery articles, which our ships export from England, is in fact not made here, but at Chemnitz, in Saxony; and it only comes to London to be exported to America and other quarters of the world, a duty of 20 per cent. preventing its consumption in this country. Now we will suppose the Derby and Leicester workmen to succeed in a strike, and to raise their wages to such a degree that the price of the articles they make is increased 20 per cent. The foreign hosiery, which is now in the King's warehouses, under lock and key, would instantly have the duty of 20 per cent. paid on it, be brought into our market, and the triumphant workmen and their masters be ruined directly. As it is, the strikes have done irreparable damage to this trade, and the flourishing German town of Chemnitz owes great part of its prosperity to the Trades' Unions of this country. It cannot be other than a pleasing sight to see the large popula-



tion of a place like Chemnitz happy, contented, and employed. But what must be the feelings of an Englishman, when looking on that smiling scene of peaceful industry? The pleasure with which he regards it cannot but be mingled with some feelings of sorrow, if the thought should strike him, that that prosperity might have been English, that that employment, that happiness and contentment, is so much torn from England by the folly of the Derby and Leicester workmen. A century and a half ago the King of France drove great part of the silk trade from that country to this by his tyrannical edicts; our workmen are in a fair way to do the same with respect to England by their Trades' Unions.

One of the worst features of these societies is their hostility to piece or task-work, and the consequent discouragement they give to the exercise of superior skill and industry. "The man who does task-work," says the Trades' Union Magazine, "is guilty of less defensible conduct than a drunkard. The worst passions of our nature are enlisted in support of task-work. Avarice, meanness,



cunning, hypocrisy, all excite and feed upon the miserable victim of task-work, while debility and destitution look out for the last morsel of their prey. A man who earns by task-work 40*s.* per week, the usual wages by day being 20*s.*, robs his fellow of a week's employment." The discouragement of merit is, indeed, the necessary consequence of the attempt to establish what is called an "equalization of wages," a state of things, in which every one is to earn an equal sum, without reference to his talent or diligence.

Some of the Trades' Unions are so extremely jealous of those of their members who are peculiarly industrious and skilful, that they have the following amongst their rules:— "Should any member of this society be known to boast of his superior ability, as to either the quantity or quality of work he can do, either in public or private company, he shall pay a fine of 2*s.* 6*d.*, or be expelled this society." Nothing can be more unjust than such a regulation as this. There could not be conceived a better way of degrading the general condition of the workmen, than by thus putting

aside all distinctions of skill and superior knowledge. There is to be one rate of wages, than which none may receive less, and none can expect to earn more. A workman can gain nothing by superior qualifications for his business, and lose nothing by the want of them; industry will not increase his wages, or negligence depress them, but the earnings of all are reduced to one common level, an attempt to raise which, by any one man, is treated as an offence to the general body.

The skilful artizans, because they are a minority, are compelled to conceal the indignation with which they see the greater number, who are comparatively inferior workmen, deprive their more industrious brethren of the advantage they have a right to expect. How are they benefited by the years of labour, which they have spent in learning some difficult branch of mechanical industry, and becoming the best workmen in their trade, if the command of a Union forces them to give up their advantages, and place themselves in the same rank with others, whose days may have been spent in idleness and drinking. It is clear

that, under these circumstances, no one will think it worth while to become a superior workman, and the inevitable result will be to lower the character and general condition of the working population.

It must not, however, be supposed that all the regulations of Trades' Unions are equally injurious. Nothing can be more honourable to some of these societies than the eagerness which they have shewn for the moral improvement of their members. The Liverpool plasterers insisted that their masters should not pay their wages in public-houses, as this practice encouraged drunkenness among the men. The Builders' Union at Birmingham determined to found schools for the education of the members' children, and also to establish lectures for teaching the principles of science to any of their body who wished to learn them. Had the Unions confined themselves to such laudable objects as these it would have been foolish and wicked to interfere with them. But unfortunately they have invariably turned their attention to benefiting their condition by means of Strikes, and hence, in

many towns, when the masters have learnt that their men had formed Unions, they have insisted that the men should leave the Union instantly, and on the men's refusal to do this a turn-out has ensued. This has been the case at Derby, at Yeovil, and in many other towns. We do not mean to say that the masters' conduct is justifiable in acting thus ; but it is excusable if we consider the thousand inconveniences, the outrages, and even murders that sometimes accompany Strikes. Owing to this cause ten men in Dublin were murdered in the course of three years, and two murders have been committed in England in the last four years, in consequence of turn-outs. The rules of the Unions almost always forbid outrages and intimidation ; but experience shews that the men cannot enforce this regulation, and the Union has but little control over its own members. Now, if the workmen could be convinced that Strikes never succeed, and would determine not to engage in them, the masters would have no excuse for turning off their men because they entered Unions. We have endeavoured to shew the

invariable ill success that attends Strikes, and we have quoted the opinions of some of the most intelligent workmen, who have had experience in these matters, for the purpose of shewing that they agree in this conclusion. The workmen suppose that the masters would beat down their wages to the very lowest point, were it not for their Strikes and Unions. But the wages of those workmen who never enter Unions, and never think of striking, have not been so beaten down. The overlookers of cotton factories receive higher wages than other persons employed in them, and they have never formed Unions.

Who ever heard of a Strike among the clerks of London? When the masters lower wages, it will be found, if the matter is closely investigated, that they are compelled to do so from the badness of trade, and that their object is to prevent actual loss to themselves. No master ever thinks of lowering wages so long as trade is prosperous, and we believe that in most cases a master does not begin to diminish the payment to his workmen till he finds he is literally losing by his business. This con-

sideration partly accounts for the ill success of the men in their strikes, since it is clear, that if the master cannot accede to the wishes of his men without losing, it would be better for him to give up business altogether rather than give in. Hence it is not the obstinacy of the masters, but actual necessity that induces them to withstand the demands of the workmen. In the Kidderminster strike the men complained of the oppression of the masters in reducing their wages, whereas if they had considered the case more attentively, they would have seen that trade happened to be then bad, and the masters were compelled to lower wages to prevent loss to themselves; and that this was the secret of the masters' perseverance and the men's failure in the turnout. It required no combination of the masters to induce them to act thus; the circumstance of their being unable to pay at the old rate without losing, was the real motive of their conduct. Sometimes the Leicester workmen have turned out for some weeks to prevent a reduction of wages, and then returned to their work at a slight advance, and this

result they have attributed to the strike : when the truth has been that the fluctuations of trade have been the real cause of the reduction of wages and their subsequent advance. Orders have been scarce, and prices have fallen, consequently the masters have been forced to lower wages to save themselves from losing. The men then turn out, when perhaps in a week or two trade becomes good, prices rise, and the masters offer higher wages ; the men then return triumphant to their work, attributing the rise of wages to the strike instead of to the real cause, the prosperity of trade. Could the men be persuaded to take this view of the case, they would not turn out, but submit to the inevitable reduction of wages, and then they would save themselves the poverty and misery which they now so frequently endure from engaging in strikes. The history of strikes leads to the conclusion, we may say the certainty, that the men have lost by them in every single instance ; and where, as in a few cases it has happened, the men have returned to their work at an advance of wages, that advance



would equally have been obtained without any strike at all.

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*Invention of Machinery owing to Trades'  
Unions.*

It is to be hoped that few persons are ignorant of the advantages which all classes of society derive from the use of machinery instead of manual labour. The demand for workmen is increased by it, and their wages and comforts are increased also. In no part of the world is the population more thick than in the cotton manufacturing districts, and yet machinery has been more extensively employed in the cotton trade than in any other, and, at the same time, the wages of those who work at it are in general very high. Messrs. Lees' cotton mills, at Gorton, employ seven hundred and eleven workpeople of all ages, from nine years and upwards, and the average wages of all the persons in the establishment is 12s. per head weekly. Mr. Ashton employs one thousand two hundred workmen in his cotton mills at Hyde; the average wages of the men

engaged in the factory is 21s. weekly, while those employed by him out of the factory, such as carters, porters, &c., and whose labour is assisted by little or no machinery, earn only 14s. weekly. This difference in the earnings between those who do work and those who do not work at machinery is in general little attended to, but still it seems to be one of the commonest results from the introduction of substitutes for manual labour, and adds one more powerful argument to the many others that might be mentioned to prove that the working classes, more than any other persons in the community, are interested in the introduction of machinery. It not only increases the demand for labour, but generally causes a large and immediate advance in the wages of those who work at it. We shall give one more example in proof of this assertion. Almost the only persons in a cotton mill whose labour is entirely manual, and who are assisted by no machinery whatever, are those who are called "batters" in fine spinning mills. Their labour requires great exertion, and simply consists in beating the cotton with

sticks, having a great resemblance to thrashing, yet they are only paid 6s. 6d. weekly, while in the very next room may be seen women and even children earning two and three times that sum, at power-loom weaving and spinning.

But, in spite of these advantages, there can be no doubt that for a time the working classes may be very greatly injured by the substitution of machinery for manual labour. If all the coaches in London were *suddenly* and without warning to be displaced by steam-carriages, the number of coachmen, ostlers, porters, &c., who would be thrown out of work—the number of farmers who would find no market for their corn and hay—would be so large that prodigious misery and inconvenience would be felt, and probably many riots would take place. *In the end*, every person, rich as well as poor, would find himself greatly benefited by the change, which, if it were introduced slowly and gradually, would hardly injure any one; the evil would come from the too great rapidity of the substitution.

Innovations in the use of machinery should never proceed by fits and starts, and never will do so if left to themselves, and if no violent exciting cause disturbs the natural course of things.

Now, the effect of Trades' Unions and strikes is to supply this violent exciting cause, to prevent the progress of machinery from being slow and regular, to force the introduction of substitutes for human labour by fits and starts, and, without warning, to deprive large bodies of workmen of the means of getting employment. We proceed to give some examples in proof of this assertion.

The strikes that have taken place among the cotton spinners have so annoyed the manufacturers, that they have been induced to try to invent machinery that should spin without the assistance of a spinner. These attempts have at length proved successful, and the machine, called the self-acting mule, which entirely dispenses with the labour of the spinner, has been the result of these endeavours.

The introduction of this invention will eventually give a death blow to the Spinners'

Union, the members of which are themselves the main causes of its use. Orders for nearly half-a-million of spindles for spinning cotton-thread on this new principle were given to the machine makers last year; nothing can now prevent its universal introduction, and in a few years the very name and trade of working-spinner will be heard of no more.

The following evidence taken by the Committee of Manufacturers and Commerce, which sat last session, will shew the way in which the combination of the spinners is forcing the adoption of this machine. It is given by Mr. Graham, a Scotch manufacturer:—

We are paying much higher in Glasgow than they are paying in England for spinning the same numbers, and in consequence of this we have been driven to employ machines, which may supersede those men (spinners).

Are you aware of any cotton-spinning work, where the proprietors are turning out the old machinery in consequence of the combination of the workmen, and introducing self-acting mules? —We are doing it ourselves.

Have you adopted the self-acting mule to get rid of combinations?—Before adopting the self-acting mule, I had the plans drawn, and I called a deputation from the men in, and explained it to them, and I said, “ You drive us either to take machines, or you drive us to bankruptcy, or to stop our works; here is an order going off to Manchester for self-acting mules; we do not wish to introduce them, and we will be the last house to introduce them, if you will take the same wages that they have in Lancashire,” and they said, “ It is of no use, we are determined not to reduce our wages.”

The Union of the wool-combers in Yorkshire has produced exactly the same effect, with respect to the introduction of machinery, as the strikes of the cotton spinners. The machine, which combs wool without the assistance of the wool-combers, was introduced two years ago, entirely owing to a strike of the men, who work at the business in a large Yorkshire factory. The proprietor of the factory, when his men all turned out, refusing to work except at a large advance of wages, immediately turned his attention to discover

some means to supersede the employment of those men. He succeeded perfectly in his attempt, and introduced a machine which made it unnecessary to employ again those who had turned out.

Every fresh strike that takes place among the wool-combers increases the number of these machines, and then so rapidly does the change take place, that very great misery is caused among the men. Last year all the wool-combers turned out in a factory at Ad-  
dingham, a small village in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The proprietor of the establishment instantly sent to Leeds for some wool-combing machines, which were set up with all possible expedition; the men who had struck of course could not be employed again, and many of them are at this moment in complete destitution, and have been soliciting subscriptions for their support from the neighbouring gentry. At the present time the patentees of this machine are erecting a large establishment at Bradford for the purpose of taking in wool to comb from the neighbouring manufacturers, and when this con-



cern is in full operation, in all probability every wool-comber in Bradford will be thrown out of employment. At any event, it is clear that this must be the eventual result, and the trade of wool-comber, like that of cotton spinner, and for the same reason, will cease to exist.

The great Bradford turn-out of 1825 was the cause of the introduction of the power-loom in stuff-weaving. The weavers were among the chief ringleaders in this strike, and their employers since that time have been taking every opportunity to substitute power-looms for hand-looms. As a power-loom will do at least as much work as two hand-looms, and, as one person can attend two power-looms, it is clear that by the introduction of this invention a manufacturer can get any quantity of cloth woven with one-fourth the number of hands he was obliged to employ when hand-looms were used. But the masters have another strong reason for making this change in their methods of manufacturing. A power-loom requires little or no manual labour to manage it, and consequently

women and boys are just as capable of weaving in this way as the strongest men. Hence, as it is the men only who engage in unions and strikes, the power-loom manufacturers invariably refuse to employ men in weaving so long as they can get women and boys.

This employment of women and boys instead of men has been very extensively resorted to by the cotton manufacturers in the west of Scotland, in order to escape the annoyances to which they were exposed from the strikes among the men. In the Factory Commission Report just presented to the House of Commons, the actuary, Dr. Mitchell, who was employed to calculate the tables of the wages, ages, sexes, &c. of those engaged in the cotton mills, seems puzzled with the conclusion brought out by these tables, which shew, that for every one hundred men, employed in the Manchester factories, there are one hundred and two women, while in the mills at Glasgow and the neighbourhood, the men are to the women as one hundred to one hundred and sixty. The effects of the Cotton-spinners' Union in Scotland explains

the cause of this difference; for the Scotch workmen have been far more violent and ferocious in their strikes than the Lancashire people; and hence the manufacturers in Scotland have had machines made expressly for women, and have used all their endeavours to carry on business without the assistance of men. This has an exceedingly bad effect on the morals and happiness of the working classes. The proper place for women, especially those who are married, is home; and in many manufacturing districts of England, a woman, on her marriage, invariably leaves her factory employment, and betakes herself to her household duties. The effect of the Trades' Unions has been to put an end to this salutary practice, in some degree, in Manchester, and almost entirely in Scotland, where the workman's habitation is wholly devoid of that comfort which a wife's presence alone can give, and his children are committed to the care of a stranger.

Mr. Babbage, in his work called "Economy of Manufactures," gives the two following instances of the introduction of machinery in consequence of strikes:—

“ About twenty years ago, the workmen employed at a very extensive factory, in forging these skelps\* out of bar-iron, ‘ struck’ for an advance of wages, and, as their demands were very exorbitant, they were not immediately complied with. In the mean time the superintendent of the establishment directed his attention to the subject; and it occurred to him, that if the circumference of the rollers, between which the bar-iron was rolled, were to be made equal to the length of a *skelp*, or of a musket-barrel, and if also the grooves in which the iron was compressed, instead of being equally deep and wide, were cut gradually deeper and wider from a point in the rollers, until it returned to the same point, then the bar-iron passing between such rollers, instead of being uniform in width and thickness, would have the form of a *skelp*. On making the trial it was found to succeed perfectly; a great reduction of human labour was effected by the process, and the workmen, who

\* A “skelp” is a piece of iron that has been forged into the shape proper to make a gun-barrel.

had acquired peculiar skill in performing it, ceased to derive any advantage from their dexterity."

"It is somewhat singular, that another and still more remarkable instance of the effect of a combination amongst workmen should have occurred but a few years since in the very same trade. The process of welding the skelps so as to convert them into gun-barrels required much skill, and, after the termination of the war, the demand for muskets having greatly diminished, the number of persons employed in that line were very much reduced. This circumstance rendered combination more easy; and upon one occasion, when a contract had been entered into for a considerable supply, to be delivered on a fixed day, the men all struck for such an advance of wages as would have caused the completion of the contract to be attended with a very heavy loss. In this difficulty, the contractors resorted to a mode of welding the gun-barrel, according to a plan for which a patent had been taken out by them some years before this event. It had not then succeeded so well

as to come into general use, in consequence of the cheapness of the usual mode of welding by hand-labour, combined with some other difficulties with which the patentee had had to contend. But the stimulus produced by the combination of the workmen for this advance of wages induced him to make new trials, and he was enabled to introduce such a facility in welding gun-barrels by rollers, and such perfection in the work itself, that, in all probability, very few will in future be welded by hand-labour. The workmen who had combined were of course no longer wanted, and instead of benefiting themselves by their combination, they were reduced permanently, by this improvement of the art, to a considerably lower rate of wages: for as the process to which they had been habituated required peculiar skill and considerable experience, they had hitherto been in the habit of earning much higher wages than other workmen of their class."

Some years ago one of the principal London card-makers, in consequence of the annoyance he experienced from his men, applied to a

mechanist of some celebrity to contrive some machinery for performing the work of card-cutting. He was dissuaded at the time from going on with the scheme, on account of the difficulty and uncertainty of accomplishing his object, and the expense of the apparatus, which was far beyond what it could be worth the while of an individual manufacturer to incur, had economy alone been his object. He therefore went on for nearly two years longer, managing as well as he could with his workmen, when he was induced to return to the mechanist, and give him orders to proceed in his experiments, whatever might be the hazard and expense, as it had become absolutely necessary for him to render himself independent of his men. Under these instructions the required machinery was constructed, its operation rendered perfect, and the greater part of the playing cards that are now sold are cut by its assistance instead of by hand.

The manufactures of this country cannot boast of a more ingenious and useful machine than that by which paper is made, and for its



invention we are wholly indebted to the strikes of the journeymen paper-makers. Mr. Fourdrinier, the ingenious author of this invention, was induced thirty years ago to turn his attention to the construction of a paper-making machine, in order to free his establishment from the inconveniences to which it was exposed from the continual strikes among his workmen. Mr. Didot, a Frenchman, had previously conceived the idea of a machine adapted to the formation of paper, and so important was the attainment of this object considered, that he sold his secret to Mr. Fourdrinier for 40,000*l*. The machine, however, in the state in which it then was, proved wholly inadequate to make a single sheet of paper, and Mr. Fourdrinier expended more than six years of anxious toil and no less than 60,000*l*. in bringing the invention to perfection. The belief which he felt of the great importance of releasing this manufacture from the constant interruptions consequent on the unruly conduct of the men engaged in it was the chief stimulus to these unparalleled exertions, and we may form some idea of the

great utility of the object sought for, when it is stated, that one year in seven was commonly calculated to be lost to every paper-mill, owing to turn-outs among the journeymen; and Mr. Fourdrinier had his own mill once lying idle for the space of eighteen months from this cause. This ingenious inventor, owing to a flaw in his patent, was deprived of those profits to which his labours so well entitled him. He is now soliciting Parliament for some compensation for the losses he has sustained, and surely no one has ever deserved better of his country than the man to whom we are mainly indebted for the diffusion of cheap literature: had it not been for Mr. Fourdrinier and the strikes among his men, the innumerable benefits arising from the certainty of getting a constant supply of low-priced paper might never have existed. Several printers, booksellers, and paper-makers have signed a memorial, from which the following is an extract:—"The paper machine has afforded facilities to the trade in general, which could not otherwise have been obtained, and been the means, in a great mea-

sure, of removing the great difficulties, inconveniences, and heavy losses to which the masters were previously subjected, from the long and frequent turn-outs of the men."

The turn-out of the Lancashire workmen in the building trade, which has been mentioned in a preceding page, has introduced a curious application of the steam-engine. This machine is now employed in some towns, instead of manual labour, in hoisting the various building materials to the top of the edifice, where they are intended to be used. The magnificent design of the Liverpool Custom-house is at the present moment in course of execution by the assistance of steam. The following letter from a master-builder, who was one of the principal sufferers in this strike, well describes the circumstances attending the introduction of the improvement.

SIR,

*Liverpool, Feb. 7, 1834.*

I have much pleasure in complying with your request, and shall feel happy if any information which I can afford will be useful to your purpose. About two years ago, the bricklayers' labourers,

whom I had at work at the new Custom-house here, began to exhibit symptoms of rebellion, the building being unusually large, and requiring much work. I found that, just in proportion as we were hurried, the labourers began to relax and grow careless, and sometimes did not do a sufficient quantity of work to cover their own wages. My wits were accordingly set to work to discover a remedy. I well knew that if I resorted to severe measures a general Strike would have been the consequence; but as we had on the ground, about thirty-five yards from the front of the edifice, a seven horse steam-engine, for the purpose of mixing up our lime and sand into mortar and making grout, I had the shaft of the mill lengthened, and a drum fixed upon it; attached to this was a chain governed by a break, which we carried in a hollow trough under ground, and connected with a cross-beam placed upon two uprights on the top of the building. We then placed three hundred bricks in a square box, slung it, and tried our engine. The bricks went up in fine style, and were received at the top by waggons placed on a light railway, furnished with cross slides; and the result was that two labourers could fill the boxes with bricks below, sling them on the chain, and two more receive

them at the top, who, by the help of the railway, conveyed them (weighing 23 cwt.) to any part of the building with ease. We thus rendered useless the services of about twenty hod-carriers at once, at the cost of about 100*l.* in machinery. The remainder of the men were for a long period quiet, and would have continued so, had not the Trades' Unions virtually compelled them to strike—many of them against their wills. The contrivance just mentioned has acted so well, that, when in full work, we usually send to the top of the building 16,000 bricks per diem, with seven or eight tons of mortar and grout, the engine all the while doing its other accustomed work. This would only pay in large buildings; in small erections, the expense of fixing the machinery would be too great; but small high-pressure steam-engines are now made, which stand upon three feet square, consume about 1 cwt. of coal a-day, and will hoist with sufficient rapidity 25 cwt. to any height; they are also sufficiently portable to be moved about in small carts; or I am satisfied that a horse with a rope and pulley working through a snatch-block would be cheaper and better than the old system of manual labour.

The contractor for the stone-work at the new

Custom-house raises all his materials by a small engine, I think it is eight-horse power, which cost him 150*l.*, and his other additional machinery about 200*l.* more. He sends his stones (varying from one to eleven tons in weight) up to the summit with perfect ease. His engine, like ours, is stationary, and his ropes run round the building to that part where the work is proceeding; and though they are sometimes 500 feet in length, no difficulty is experienced from this cause. We send up indiscriminately bricks, stone, iron, or timber; the engine is much more tractable and civil than the hod-men, easier managed, keeps good hours, drinks no whiskey, and is never tired. I need hardly add, that in a large building it is much cheaper, more expeditious and satisfactory than carrying up materials on men's shoulders. The time consumed by the men in *descending*, and by the slowness of their ascent, consequent on the loss of strength caused by having to overcome the gravity of their own bodies before they have strength to spare for carrying a heavy burden, makes the hod-carriers far inferior to the steam-engine, more especially if we consider the constancy with which the latter works. I do not now fear a turn-out of hod-carriers, because I have

proved that we can do very well without them ; and I think that I now see many other modes of saving labour, which I should instantly avail myself of, were another strike to happen amongst my workmen. It is also obvious to myself that many of the uses to which machinery is now applied, may be traced to turn-outs, which, having subjected masters to inconveniences, have compelled them to scheme mechanical contrivances, that otherwise would not have been thought of. Feeling that improvements in mechanism will not eventually injure the labourer—yet I would not hastily adopt such as would suddenly deprive a number of men of their subsistence, did not their own folly compel me to it. I am now quite sure that another strike or two will annihilate many hod-carriers and brick-makers, and this principle of hoisting by stationary or moveable steam-engines will no doubt be adopted for many other purposes, if the operatives in particular departments endeavour to force their employers to pay a higher rate of wages than they can afford. For instance, we know that two stationary engines at each dock, with shafts and drums running along the quays, would discharge the cargoes of all the ships, with a tenth of the porters now employed : at present



I should be sorry to see it adopted ; but I know, before long, it must be done.

I am, Sir, your very faithful Servant,

SAMUEL HOLME.



*State of the Law respecting Unions.*

It is a maxim of English jurisprudence, justified by its obvious necessity, that ignorance of the law does not excuse from criminal responsibility. No man can relieve himself from the penal consequences of committing an unlawful action by pleading that he never heard of the law or statute which forbids it; and for this reason a prudent man, before he steps out of his usual path of occupation, and enters upon a new course of conduct with the view of improving his condition, will carefully satisfy himself that he will not, by so doing, become obnoxious to the laws, and thereby involve himself in misery and ruin. It is possible that some of the unfortunate men, who were lately convicted at Dorchester, at the time they became Unionists, may have been ignorant of the precise nature of the laws they were transgressing. The engagements to secrecy, however, and the unusual precautions and ceremonies attending their combination, must have excited a suspicion that they were

doing something legally wrong. Happy would it have been for them if this suspicion had led to inquiry ! Had they paused upon these equivocal appearances, until they had obtained full information, they might at this moment have been pursuing their useful employments in their native country, instead of crossing the seas as banished felons to a place of punishment and wretchedness.

We firmly believe that many working men who have inconsiderately entered into Trades Unions are at this moment liable to a similar punishment : and though there appears to be no disposition on the part of Government to use the terrors of the law against them ; though the Attorney-General has not yet prosecuted, individuals irritated and injured by these associations have not the same motives for forbearance, and cannot be expected to refrain from using such offensive weapons as the law places in their hands. An angry manufacturer or tradesman may at any time prosecute by indictment ; and it is really surprising, in the state of warfare now existing between employers and workmen,

that more prosecutions of this kind have not occurred. And it should be borne in mind that when once a legal conviction has taken place before a competent tribunal, and upon sufficient evidence, the mercy of the Crown can seldom, without impropriety, interpose to pardon the offender. Such an interference would be, in effect, a condemnation of the law by the Crown: it would be to a certain extent the assumption and exercise of a power of dispensing with penal laws, and of a right on the part of the Government to impose a veto upon the execution of criminal justice.

Much delusion and false doctrine have prevailed upon this subject; and it is with the earnest desire of removing mistaken impressions, of communicating sound practical information to the numerous persons who may be interested in these matters, and of effectually warning them against hidden dangers, that we add to this address some plain remarks upon the present state of the criminal law respecting combinations. Many of the Unions now existing are clearly illegal associ-

ations, and certain acts and proceedings of almost all of them are in direct violation of the law ; we are anxious, therefore, to display to those who engage in them a fair and accurate account of their liabilities. The object is to warn, and not to speculate ; and we shall, therefore, industriously refrain from any remarks upon the wisdom or efficiency of the existing laws. We are not justified in transgressing any established law, however injurious and impolitic we may consider it ; and we are equally amenable to it whether it be good or bad. If we disapprove of it, we ought to use our best endeavours, by peaceable and lawful means, to remove or alter it ; but it is equally our duty and our interest to yield an entire obedience to it as long as it continues to be a part of the law of the land in which we live.

I. In the first place it should be stated, as there are still many Trades' Unions which make use of oaths, that all associations bound together by oaths not authorized or required by law, are illegal. There is very high authority for stating, that persons forming them-

selves into an association, for any object whatever, by means of unauthorized oaths, are guilty of an offence at common law. Lord Coke says\* that "it is a high contempt to minister an oath without warrant of law, to be punished by fine and imprisonment." In modern times a similar opinion has often been expressed by eminent judges, and in particular by Mr. Justice Le Blanc, a judge of the highest character for learning, on the trial of Eadon, under the Special Commission at York in 1815, as reported in the State Trials. "The administering of any oath whatever," says that learned judge, "innocent or unlawful, by any person not duly authorized by law to give an oath, was at all times, by the common law of this country, illegal, and a misdemeanour." If, therefore, the administration of an oath be a misdemeanour, as these and other authorities declare it to be, it follows, that if several persons agree to bind themselves to any design, lawful or unlawful, by administering to each other an unauthorized oath, they are guilty of a conspiracy at common law, and liable to a discretionary punish-

\* 3 Inst. 165.



ment by fine and imprisonment. This, however, is a liability which depends in some degree upon a legal subtlety, and is, perhaps, not likely to be enforced, on account of the difficulty of its practical application.

The punishment imposed by the statute law upon the administration of unlawful oaths and engagements is more definite and formidable. By the 37th Geo. 3, c. 123, s. 1, it is enacted, that every person shall be deemed guilty of felony, and be liable to transportation for seven years, who shall in any manner administer, or assist, or be present at, or consent to administering or taking any oath or engagement intended to bind the party taking it to any of the following objects, viz.

1. To obey the orders of any committee or body of men not lawfully constituted, or of any leader, or other person, not having authority by law for that purpose.

2. Not to inform or give evidence against any associate.

3. Not to reveal any illegal act done or to be done.

4. Not to reveal the import of any illegal oath or engagement taken.

By the same Act of Parliament it is further declared, that every engagement or obligation whatever shall be deemed an oath within the meaning of the Act; that every person taking such an oath or engagement, without compulsion, is guilty of felony, and liable to seven years' transportation, and that no compulsion shall excuse the party, unless he gives information of the fact to a magistrate within four days from the time of taking the oath.

Now it is quite obvious that the words of this statute are directly applicable to almost all the Trades' Unions in which an oath is used upon the introduction of a new member: most of the oaths of secrecy and adherence proved to have been administered at Dorchester, Exeter, and other places, come immediately within the words of the prohibition; and it is hardly possible to suppose the case of an oath taken with reference to any of the usual objects of such combinations, which shall not be, directly or constructively, in violation of this enactment.

It has been objected that the 37th Geo. 3, c. 123, was directed to offences of a political

character, and is, therefore, not legally applicable to offences of a different nature. The statute was passed in consequence of the mutiny at the Nore in 1797 ; and its primary object, as the preamble imports, was, no doubt, the suppression of associations formed for seditious and rebellious purposes. But it by no means follows that it is not applicable to associations of a different character, which come within the words of the enacting clauses, and are productive of mischievous effects, which might possibly have been contemplated by the legislature in passing the statute. In a case which occurred many years ago \*, the Court of King's Bench expressed a confident opinion that the statute applied to oaths or engagements taken by members of an association, whose object was to raise wages and make regulations in a particular trade,—Lord Ellenborough saying, that “ he could not bring his mind to doubt upon the subject.” The indictment upon which the conviction took place at the last Assizes at Dorchester was framed upon this statute.

\* The King *v.* Marks, 2 East, 157.

In consequence likewise of the oaths by which they are associated many of the Trades' Unions may become unlawful combinations, within the provisions of the 57th Geo. 3, c. 19, and the members of them may be liable to the severe penalties of that statute. It declares that *societies or clubs* taking unlawful oaths or engagements, within the meaning of the 37th Geo. 3, c. 123, *or any oath not required or authorized by law*, shall be deemed to be unlawful combinations within the meaning of an Act of Parliament, commonly called the Corresponding Society Act (39 Geo. 3, c. 79). On referring to that statute, it appears that persons belonging to the unlawful combinations therein described may be punished summarily with fine and imprisonment by a magistrate, and if found guilty, upon an indictment, may be transported for seven years. It also provides that public houses in which the unlawful meetings are holden, may be deprived of their licences by two Justices, on evidence of the fact. The 57th Geo. 3, c. 19, was one of the Six Acts, and was no doubt primarily directed against certain po-

litical associations, viz. the Spencean, and other societies, whose doctrines and practices had become formidable to the peace of the community in the year 1817. But the words of the enacting clauses are sufficiently comprehensive to extend to all associations, and the same legal interpretation would apply to them as was applied by the Court of King's Bench to the words of the 37th Geo. 3, c. 123, in the case of the King against Marks, with this additional confirmation of the doctrine, as to the 57th Geo. 3, c. 19, that the express exception in that statute of freemasons' lodges, quakers' meetings, and charitable societies, distinctly shews that it was not the intention of the legislature to limit its operation to merely political combinations.

The result of what has been above stated is, that members of Unions, in which oaths are used, are in perpetual jeopardy. For merely taking or administering the oaths they are liable to prosecution at common law for a misdemeanour; and if bound with other persons by means of an oath to any common design, they may be indicted and

punished by fine and imprisonment for a conspiracy. By the statute law they incur still heavier responsibilities, being subject to transportation for seven years if the oath they take is of the character described in the statute of 1797, and to fine and imprisonment, or transportation, for an unlawful combination, if on entering their Unions they take any oaths at all, which are not required or authorized by law.

II. It is not, however, essential to the existence of a Trades' Union that the members of it should be bound by an oath; and, accordingly, it is said that many Unions have abolished all oaths and specific engagements upon becoming aware of the difficulties and dangers attending the use of such obligations. But where no oath or engagement is administered, the Unions may be unlawful conspiracies in consequence of the objects they intend, the means by which they propose to effect their objects, or their internal machinery.

It may here be useful to observe that the law of England has at all times been particu-

larly jealous of all kinds of conspiracies. In the days of the Tudors and Stuarts a confederacy to raise the rate of wages generally, attended with the slightest disposition to employ force, or the collection of large bodies of people for the purpose of procuring the repeal of a law, would have been considered high treason. At the present day, associations, whose objects or necessary consequences are to endanger the public peace, embarrass trade, enhance the price of articles of general consumption, or injure the interests of individuals or classes, are unlawful conspiracies at common law. And there is a peculiar circumstance observable in the law on this subject, viz. that an action, which is perfectly lawful and innocent in the case of an individual, may become unlawful and punishable when performed by members in pursuance of a concerted design. Thus, in 1721\*, several journeymen tailors in the town of Cambridge were indicted for a conspiracy to raise their wages, and found guilty. The tailors objected, in arrest of judgment, that no

\* Modern Reports, vol. viii. p. 11.



offence against the law was charged upon them by the indictment, inasmuch as every man had a right to stipulate at what wages he would work ; but the Court of King's Bench held that, " although the matter about which they conspired might have been lawful for them, or any of them to do, if they had not conspired to do it, yet that a conspiracy of any kind was illegal ;" and the defendants were punished accordingly. It was with reference to the illegality of almost all associations by which public interests may be affected, that Sir James Scarlett, in 1825, expressed his decided opinion, " that if all the penal laws against combinations by workmen, for increase of wages, were struck out of the statute-book, the common law of the land would still be amply sufficient to prevent the mischievous effects of such combinations."

Acting upon this impression, and the conviction that the numerous statutes, which, in the course of two centuries, had been passed from time to time to suppress combinations amongst workmen, were impolitic and unjust,

as well as unnecessary, the Legislature, in 1826, confirmed the repeal of all such statutes by the 6 Geo. 4, c. 129. But it would be a fatal error to suppose that, by this Act of Parliament, all combinations amongst workmen are permitted or legalized. Such combinations are still liable to prosecution as conspiracies, excepting in the particular cases of associations specifically protected by the statute. Now the cases protected are,—

1st. Those of persons “meeting together *for the sole purpose* of consulting upon and determining the rate of wages, which *the persons present at such meeting* shall require for their work, or the time for which they shall work.”

And 2dly. Those of persons “entering into a verbal or written agreement *among themselves* for fixing the rate of wages which *the parties to such agreement* shall require for their work, or the time for which they shall work.”

Workmen, therefore, who attend consultations or meetings, or enter into agreements for either of the above purposes, are exempted

from prosecution or penalty for so doing. But a little consideration of the clause in the statute will satisfy us how extremely limited these exceptions are. In order to be within the protection of the statute the consultations of the meeting must not extend to the arrangement of means to influence those not personally present to enter into the association; nor must the agreement purport to bind in any way other persons than those who are express parties to it. There must be no election of delegates or committees; no oaths or engagements; no canvassing for proselytes, or correspondence with other societies or meetings:—at least, if such things take place at these meetings, they are in no degree legalized or protected by the statute, and are to be judged and dealt with as if it had never passed. So also, if workmen belonging to a particular trade, assemble together to consult how to raise the wages of that trade generally, or how to draw other workmen not present into a scheme of resistance, the persons present at such meeting are liable to be indicted at the discretion of any

prosecutor or informer, either for a conspiracy at common law, or an unlawful combination under various statutes. It was upon this principle that one Bykerdike, a coal-miner, was indicted, tried and convicted for a conspiracy at the Spring Assizes, holden at Lancaster, in 1832, before Mr. Justice Patteson \*. The facts of this case were as follows : Bykerdike and several other coal-miners met together, and having taken certain oaths, agreed upon a letter to be addressed to the superintendent of the colliery in which they worked, stating that "all the workmen in his employ would strike in fourteen days, unless certain other workmen specified in the letter were discharged." The letter purported to be written "by order of the board of directors for the body of coal-miners." The learned judge told the jury that "the statute did not protect a combination for such a purpose as this, and that it was never meant to empower workmen to meet and combine for the purpose of dictating to their masters whom they should employ." Upon this direction

\* Moody and Robinson's Reports, vol. i. p. 179.

the jury found the defendant guilty, and he was punished accordingly. We have been more particular in pointing out the bearing and limits of this statute, because its effect has been much misunderstood in consequence of its having been commonly represented as authorizing generally all combinations amongst workmen for the purpose of raising wages.

There is another mode in which persons attaching themselves to Unions may become liable to prosecution for conspiracy. By the 6 Geo. IV. c. 129, sec. 3, persons committing any of the following acts, and convicted in a summary manner before a magistrate, are liable to be imprisoned, with hard labour, for three months, viz.: 1st, Forcing or endeavouring to force by violence, threats, *or other obstruction*, any journeyman or other person hired in any manufacture, from continuing in the same; 2d, *preventing or endeavouring to prevent any workman from hiring himself to any person*; 3d, molesting or obstructing another, for the purpose of inducing him to belong to any club or association, or to contribute to any common fund, or to pay any fine or

penalty for not belonging to such club, or contributing to such fund, or not complying with any rules made to obtain an advance of wages, or to lessen or alter the hours of working, or decrease the quantity of work, or to regulate the management of any manufacture; 4th, forcing or endeavouring to force by violence or intimidation, any manufacturer to make any alteration in his mode of regulating his manufacture, or to limit the number of his apprentices, workmen, or servants.

These several acts being specifically declared by the statute to be illegal, a combination to effect any of them would be an unlawful conspiracy, and would subject members of it to a much heavier punishment than that applied by the Act to the individual offences. It is now but too notorious that the conduct of many of the Unions has rendered them obnoxious to prosecution on this account.

Lastly, combinations, such as the Trades' Unions, may become unlawful, in consequence of their internal regulations being in violation

of the provisions of several Acts of Parliament. By the Corresponding Society Act, (39 Geo. III. c. 79,) which has been already mentioned, it is enacted that “ every society, the members of which shall take any test or declaration not required by law, and not authorized and approved by two justices of the peace ; and every society composed of different divisions or branches, or of different parts, acting separately from each other, or of which any part shall have separate officers appointed to act for such part,” are to be considered unlawful combinations : and every person acting as a member of them, or supporting them by a contribution of money, or otherwise, shall be deemed guilty of an unlawful confederacy. The punishment assigned by the Act to such offences is a fine of 20*l.* or three months’ imprisonment, if the offender is convicted in a summary manner before a magistrate ; and if found guilty upon an indictment, transportation for seven years.

The 57 Geo. III, c. 19, s. 25, also specifies several other particulars of internal regulation which may render societies illegal, and

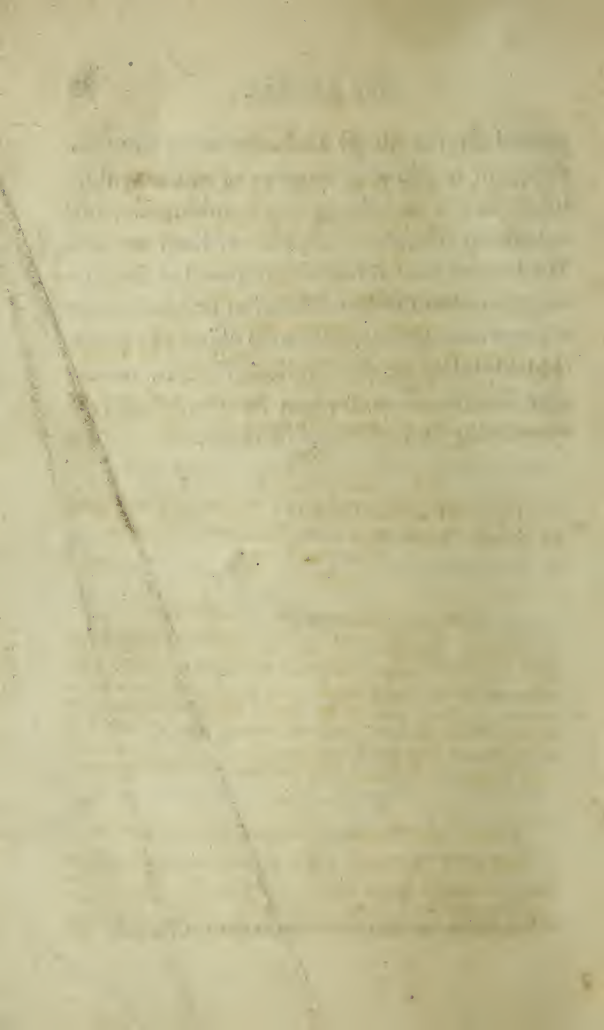


subject the members of them to prosecution and punishment. It declares that "every society or club, the members of which shall take any test or declaration not required or authorized by law ; and every society or club *appointing any committee, delegates, or representatives to confer with any other club*, or to induce any person to become members thereof," shall be taken to be an unlawful combination and confederacy, within the meaning of the Corresponding-Society Act ; and all persons belonging to such clubs or societies, or supporting them in any manner, are liable to the penalties and punishment contained in that Act, as above-mentioned.

If the above statement be correct, it is quite clear that the path of all those who enter into large combinations, with a view to attain an object which may by possibility injure the interests of the public, is thickly surrounded by legal difficulties and dangers. The common law (to use the language of Scripture) "rains snares" upon them ; and the sweeping and general provisions of the various statutes which, at different periods, have been

passed for the purpose of repressing the tendency of mankind in seasons of excitement to inconvenient and dangerous combination, incalculably increase the perils of their course. We believe that it is scarcely possible for any circumspection in the formation or machinery of large associations, with such objects as those contemplated by the Trades' Unions, to secure the members of them from criminal responsibility in one shape or other.

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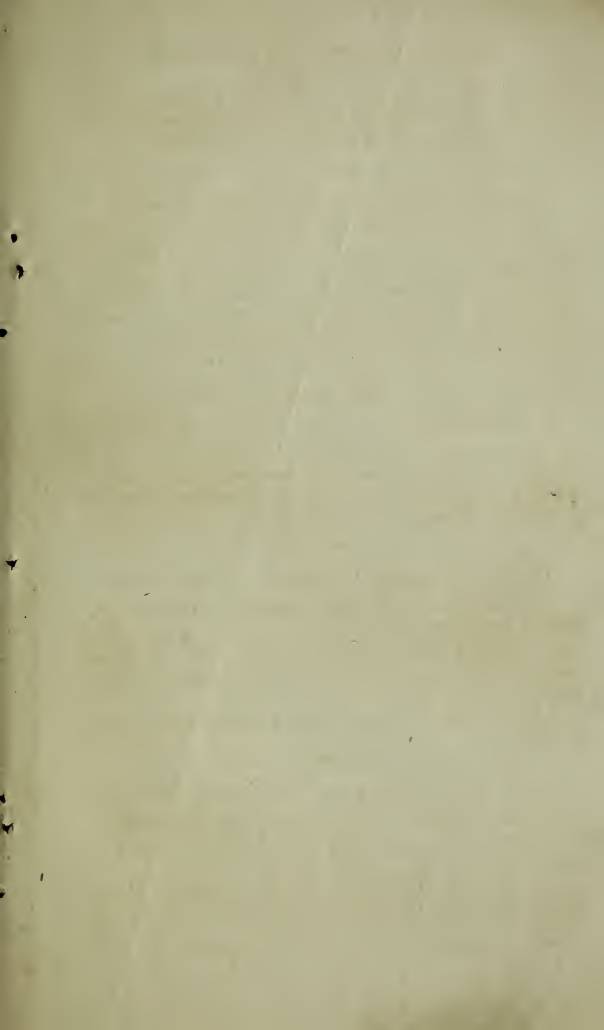
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